

What is claimed is:

5        1. A method of exercising access control over television programs using a parental control user interface having different functions, said method comprising the steps of:

requiring a password for a master mode to obtain access to all the functions of the parental control user interface;

10        entering a criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded or overriding a blocked television program;

selecting a program for displaying or recording;

15        prompting a user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding criterion; and

unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overbidding criterion so it can be viewed if the user enters the password responsive to the 20 prompt.

2. An apparatus for parental control of a television receiver, comprising:

a television display;

25        a tuner for receiving a plurality of television programs and passing one of said television programs;

a memory for storing a blocking override list comprising information relating to at least one television program, and an enable override list comprising information relating to at least 30 one television program;

35        a microprocessor selectively operable in a blocking mode and an unblocking mode, said microprocessor generating a blocking command in said unblocking mode only when the television program passed by the tuner corresponds to said information relating to one of the television program in said blocking override list, and

generating a blocking command in said blocking mode only when the  
5 television program passed by the tuner does not correspond to  
said information relating to any one of the television programs  
in said enable override list; and

10 a blocking circuit for coupling the television program  
passed by the tuner to said television display, said blocking  
circuit having a control input which causes the television  
program passed by the tuner to be blocked from said television  
display in response to the blocking command.

15 3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the television program  
passed by the tuner includes rating information, and further  
comprising a vertical blanking decoder for extracting said rating  
information from the television program, said microprocessor  
being selectively operated in one of said blocking mode and  
unblocking mode based on said extracted rating information.

20 4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein said memory comprises  
rating information stored therein, and said microprocessor is  
selectively operated in one of said blocking mode and unblocking  
mode based on a comparison between the extracted rating  
information from the television program and the rating  
25 information stored in memory.

30 5. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the blocking override  
list information comprises channel, date, time and length for  
each of its respective television programs, and the enable  
override list information comprises channel, date, time and  
length for each of its respective television programs.

6. A method for exercising parental control over a  
television receiver, comprising the steps of:

5 creating an enable override list comprising information relating to at least one television program to be watched or recorded in a blocking mode;

10 creating a blocking override list comprising information relating to at least one television program to be blocked in an unblocking mode;

15 selecting the blocking mode or the unblocking mode;

20 permitting only television programs relating to said information in the enable override list to be watched or recorded when the blocking mode is selected; and

25 blocking only television programs relating to said information in the blocking override list from being watched or recorded when the unblocking mode is selected.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the selecting step further comprises the steps of programming the television receiver with rating information, extracting rating information broadcast with a television program tuned by the television receiver, comparing the programmed rating information with the broadcast rating information, and selecting the blocking mode or unblocking mode as a function of said comparison.

25 8. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of creating the enable override list comprises entering information relating to channel, date, time and length of the television programs to be watched or recorded in the blocking mode, and the step of creating the blocking override list comprises entering 30 information relating to channel, date, time and length of the television programs to be blocked in the unblocking.

9. A method for exercising parental control, comprising the steps of:

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receiving a television signal carrying a television program and a rating for the television program;

5 inputting a rating level;

extracting the television program rating from the received television signal;

comparing the extracted television program rating with the inputted rating level;

10 displaying the television program carried by the received television signal if the extracted television program rating is below the inputted rating level;

blocking the television program carried by the received television signal if the extracted television program rating is above the inputted rating level;

15 selecting a specific television program which, when carried by the received television signal, will override the comparing step; and

20 displaying the specific television program, when carried by the received television signal, if its rating is above the inputted rating level, or blocking the specific television program, when carried by the received television signal, if its rating is below the inputted rating level.

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